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AUTHOR Maner, Arnold H.
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the world job training occurs in a variety of settings, with wide differences in funding sources and management systems. Regardless of the source of funding or the administrative organization, certain costs are involved, including payment for personnel, facilities, and equipment. In times of economic hardship, when funds for training are diminished, innovation becomes necessary. In 1975, Wor-Wic Technical Community College was established in response to the need for the upgrading and expansion of the local labor force. Funded by a variety of sources, Wor-Wic offers training in existing public and private facilities in the region, using churches and storefronts for day lecture space, public schools for evening classes, and specialized shops and labs for vocational training. A custom-designed "in-house" program complements regularly scheduled courses, providing benefits to owners and employees of local businesses. Without the burden of a campus-bound philosophy, Wor-Wic is able to minimize per-student costs and maximize program flexibility. The decreased costs and greater flexibility of the "college without walls" approach make it a viable alternative for developing countries, given adequate support from significant leaders and financial backing from international funding agencies. (RO)

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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

A Unique Approach

by

Dr. Arnold H. Maner
President
Wor-Wic Tech Community College
Salisbury, Maryland

Presented at a Meeting of the
Association for the Advancement of Policy Research
and Development in the Third World
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Presented by: Dr. Arnold H. Maner, President
Wor-Wic Tech Community College
Salisbury, Maryland

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: A UNIQUE APPROACH

Introduction

This paper presents a non-traditional approach to job training through the utilization of existing facilities in both public and private sectors. The replication of this model in third world countries is advocated. It is believed that this method allows greater flexibility for meeting diverse needs for skill development, while keeping training costs low in comparison with traditional methods of delivery. A specific example of the successful application of this concept is provided here, along with an explanation of how it could be adapted and implemented in developing countries.

Background

Job Training Systems

Throughout the world, job training occurs in a variety of settings -- in secondary and postsecondary schools as well as in factories, offices and other locations. Funding sources and management systems also vary significantly, with some programs being funded by public sources -- local, state and national revenues, some funded by companies, others by tuition and still others by some combination of financial resources from various public and private sources. They are managed by individuals and organizations as diverse as the sources of funding. Corporations run management development programs and skill development courses for specific occupations, as do trade schools, public schools and colleges and universities. The underlying common denominator is that people are learning attitudes and obtaining knowledge and skills for the purpose of performing jobs -- with the primary motivating factor being economic development.

Cost Benefit Factors

Regardless of the source of funding or the administrative organization, there are certain costs involved. Payment for personnel, facilities and equipment is necessary. The more technical skills require more sophisticated and expensive equipment. Also, if a skill is in high demand, it is more difficult (and therefore more expensive) to obtain instructors with recent industrial experience to teach in the program. And, although the need may be critical, the number of people who need training may be low in comparison with the costs, thus raising the costs of training to prohibitive levels.

In an expanding economy, cost factors are not of such critical concern. The number of jobs are increasing and both governmental and private interests are likely to respond favorably to an expressed need for funding. Fewer resources exist in developing nations, but at times when industrial nations are enjoying good economic health, funding has been forthcoming in the form of grants through the World Bank, the Japan Fund, Kuwait Fund, Saudi Fund, International Monetary Fund, the International Labor Organization and many other sources. Such funding is provided (or not provided) for a number of complex economic and political reasons.

When the world economy is depressed, however, the availability of funds for training is greatly diminished, especially in regions where economic development is most critical. In such circumstances, innovation becomes necessary. Priorities must be established, employment and manpower surveys must be conducted and only the most cost-beneficial programs will be implemented. Frequently, in times of economic hardship, programs which could be of most benefit to the economy are not implemented, a popular reason being that the cost of constructing and equipping a training facility does not warrant the benefits. Such a conclusion may be based on data indicating a limited number of jobs available in the geographic area.

Attempts at consolidation as a solution have been only partially successful. Cultural values will not allow trainees to move to central locations far from home and family to undergo training. Also, in cases where training is made available in urban centers, trainees who do migrate for training do not return to the rural setting where job development and economic diversification are most critical for the overall economy of the nation.

The Wor-Wic Tech Experience

In 1975, local government leaders in a rural area on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland started a technical community college in response to the need for the upgrading and expansion of the local labor force. Named after the two counties providing financial support (Worcester and Wicomico), the college established a mission of providing job skill training for people in the local employment market.

Prior to the creation of the college, local job needs were assessed in a number of blue and white collar occupations, and projections were made. While there was evidence of a strong commitment to attracting new industry and an active industrial development group with demonstrated success in bringing industries into a new industrial park, there were strong political and financial roadblocks to the creation of a new technical college. With the help of a consultant, a local steering committee examined several alternatives for providing technical training to adults. The committee's final recommendation led to the creation of Wor-Wic Tech Community College, one of a dozen community colleges "without walls" in the United States.

Funded by a variety of sources, Wor-Wic Tech offers training in existing public and private facilities in the region. It takes advantage of churches and storefronts for day lecture space and public schools for evening classes. It utilizes shop equipment in public schools and industries in the evening.

On-the-job training is provided in both formal and non-formal apprenticeship experiences. Specialized shops and labs are rented and equipped as necessary to supplement existing resources.

The organizational structure includes a board of trustees appointed by the Governor of Maryland, a president, a dean of instruction and other officers needed to ensure quality in the instructional programs. Faculty are recruited directly from industry and since approximately 60 percent are part-time faculty members, most still retain direct contacts with businesses and industries in the area.

The college has been effective. In a small, rural area such as the Lower Eastern Shore, a surprising 4,000 people can be found enrolled in one or more of the college's programs each year, with each person having his or her own goals of developing new job skills, upgrading existing skills to obtain advancement or promotion or learning about a different subject area to improve job prospects.

To demonstrate the diversity of courses and programs offered through the college's credit and continuing education departments, the following is provided as an example of study topics presented to date:

HEALTH OCCUPATIONS

nursing
radiologic technology
alcoholism and drug abuse
cardiopulmonary resuscitation
standard first aid
hospice care
cancer patient care
stress management

BUSINESS FIELDS

banking
business management
accounting
marketing
retailing
wholesaling
secretarial studies
income tax preparation
para-legal studies

HUMAN SERVICES

law enforcement
hotel-motel-restaurant management
real estate
day care
career development
fund raising and grantsmanship

TECHNICAL SKILLS

automotive technology
mechanical maintenance
machine shop training
electricity and electronics
welding

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES

air conditioning and refrigeration
drafting
blueprint reading
plumbing
construction cost estimating

A custom-designed "in-house" program complements regularly-scheduled courses offered through Wor-Wic Tech's Office of Community Education, recently providing benefits to owners and employees of businesses such as a stationery store, restaurants, an attorney's office, banks, electric companies, a wholesaling business, a cable television company, nursery schools, a chicken processing plant, government offices, insurance companies, hotels and motels, a chemical company, manufacturing industries, a printing company and hospitals.

Partly in response to the availability of a locally-trained workforce, new industry has moved into the area. Other pre-existing companies have expanded their workforce and graduates of Wor-Wic Tech's courses and programs have obtained jobs in the local economy. Periodic evaluations have indicated a high level of satisfaction of graduates, employers and sponsoring county governments. Wor-Wic Tech is fulfilling its mission.

Two major factors -- relative costs and flexibility -- deserve further explanation. Although the college is the newest, and therefore the smallest, community college in the state, and although it offers the highest percentage of expensive technical programs, it is far from being the most expensive in cost per student. In fact, statewide comparative data published by the State Board for Community Colleges indicates that Wor-Wic Tech is in the lower third on a cost-per-student basis.

With regard to flexibility, it is much easier to respond to employer needs on a timely basis without the burden of a campus-bound philosophy. Non-tenured faculty can be retained for special projects on an as-needed basis. Frequently, the instructors come from industries which need the training and they can be made available on an off-time or release-time basis. One specific example is the college's program to train and retrain

pilots for Shorts 330 commuter aircraft. With funding from the state legislature, the college contracted for the design and installation of a procedures simulator at the local airport. Training was made available for pilots from the local commuter and from other commuters in North America which utilize this aircraft. The instructor was an employee of Henson Airlines, a U.S. Air commuter. When the unfortunate events surrounding the nation's air traffic controllers strike occurred, the need for training no longer existed due to the curtailment of flights in the U.S. In response to this reduced need, the instructor is being reassigned with the company and the program will be discontinued until the need re-emerges. Other programs have been started and discontinued in a similar manner in response to immediate employment needs. In summary Wor-Wic Tech provides evidence of a successful model by which job training can be offered to local residents and employers on a cost-effective basis.

Transferability to Developing Nations

Diffusion, the art of technology transfer from one setting to another, is a complex undertaking. The idea of a "college without walls" was not easy to sell to residents of Maryland's Eastern Shore. It will not be easy to implement this concept in developing nations. The advocacy of innovative ideas by "change agents" has been met with opposition throughout history. Such an effort should not be approached lightly. There are several basic requirements for success. Among these are a perception of need in the "target" area by significant opinion leaders. The leaders and change agents involved must have a thorough understanding of the proposed innovation in order for it to gain acceptance. Officials at institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are, of course, competent in introducing new products and procedures into diverse cultures

throughout the world. These same officials are also aware that existing political and economic roadblocks make it difficult to finance the construction of technical training facilities at levels established in the 1970s. If, however, these same decision-makers become aware of the potential advantages of an alternative approach, they might consider funding a pilot project in a developing nation. The possible results of decreased costs and greater flexibility might make such an effort an attractive venture.

In closing, I would like to invite you to ask questions, to visit our college in Salisbury, Maryland, and to explore the possibility of implementing a technical college "without walls" in one or more developing nations. Your assistance in making international funding agencies aware of this alternative will be appreciated. Thank you very much.

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